

# Are You Called to the Ministry?

2 Corinthians 2:12 – 5:21

Halifax: 3 May 2020, 10:30 AM

## Introduction

As you have already been reminded this morning, we have arranged to have our annual congregational meeting (that was cancelled due to Covid-19) this Tuesday, May 7.

- Sometimes, on the week of our congregational meeting, the elders will ask me to do a special sermon that is somehow related to our meeting.
  - We have had sermons on our calling to outreach and evangelism as a church, on tithing and stewardship, and sometimes related to the selection of officers or how we should engage with them.
  - Sometimes we have no special sermon at all.
- But this year, the elders asked me to preach on discerning a call to the ministry.
  - This came in part from a request from the Synod's missions board (World Witness) that congregations identify those among them that might potentially be missionaries.

Perhaps you are someone who has sometimes wondered if the ministry is something that God would have you to do.

- In 1 Tim 3:1, we are told that it is a good thing to desire.
- I hope very much that this sermon will help you discern if God is calling you.
  - Sometimes people look for a supernatural call like the prophets had.
    - They read about Moses' burning bush, Isaiah's vision of Christ on the throne, or Paul's Damascus Road experience and expect the same kind of thing.
  - But it is important to understand that these were prophets—the very nature of their ministry was that God spoke directly to them.
    - God does not call people to the ordinary office of minister of the word in that way.
    - Rather, He simply qualifies those that He has appointed to serve Him with the necessary gifts and graces which are then recognised by the individual, the session and presbytery, and the congregation.
  - God did not lay out qualifications in His word for apostles and prophets because He called them directly, whether the church approved of them or not.
    - But for ordinary ministers of the word, we have to discern if they meet the qualifications for office that God has given to us in the Scriptures.
  - So if you are someone who has wondered if you are called to the ministry, I hope this sermon will be helpful to you.

But let me also encourage the rest of you—

- even you who are perhaps settled in another calling or know that you are not called to the ministry of the word—for example, if you are female (the Bible is clear that only men are called to the ministry of the word) or if you know that you don't have the mental capacity for such a calling or are disqualified in some way...

- Let me encourage all of you to listen carefully to this sermon too because there will be much in it for you.
  - First of all, as a member of the church, you are all recipients of ministry and should be interested in what ministers are called to be and do. I will be talking about how the Lord has so much to give to His people through the ministry, and that should be of great interest to you.
    - You will be learning how He gives His inheritance to you through preaching!
    - And speaking of that...
  - Secondly, the first two of the three general qualifying requirements that God gives to those He calls to ministers are qualities that you and every Christian ought to aspire to and which you can obtain by the grace of God, namely:
    - a blameless life and
    - a passion that Christ be known.
  - Thirdly, you should have a desire to see God raise up qualified men in His church to go forth in His name with the precious gospel of Jesus Christ—you should encourage this and you should pray for this and you should do all you can to facilitate this.

Now for our Scripture reading.

- I have chosen 2 Corinthians 2:12 – 5:21 for our reading.
  - As we read this, be aware that when Paul says “we” in this passage, he is speaking of himself along with other ministers of the word that serve with him.
  - Here we learn much about the ministry of preaching and how God uses it.
    - Listen carefully now to God’s word.

**2 Cor 2:12-5:21: Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, <sup>13</sup> I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia. <sup>14</sup> Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. <sup>15</sup> For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. <sup>16</sup> To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is* sufficient for these things? <sup>17</sup> For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ. <sup>3:1</sup> Do we begin again**

**to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you or *letters* of commendation from you? <sup>2</sup> You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; <sup>3</sup> clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart. <sup>4</sup> And we have such trust through Christ toward God. <sup>5</sup> Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, <sup>6</sup> who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. <sup>7</sup> But if the ministry of death, written *and* engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could**

not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was passing away, <sup>8</sup> how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? <sup>9</sup> For if the ministry of condemnation *had* glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. <sup>10</sup> For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. <sup>11</sup> For if what is passing away *was* glorious, what remains *is* much more glorious. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech— <sup>13</sup> unlike Moses, *who* put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. <sup>14</sup> But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ. <sup>15</sup> But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. <sup>16</sup> Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. <sup>17</sup> Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. <sup>18</sup> But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. <sup>4:1</sup> Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. <sup>2</sup> But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. <sup>3</sup> But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, <sup>4</sup> whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. <sup>5</sup> For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light

of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. <sup>8</sup> *We are* hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— <sup>10</sup> always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. <sup>11</sup> For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. <sup>12</sup> So then death is working in us, but life in you. <sup>13</sup> And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, <sup>14</sup> knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present *us* with you. <sup>15</sup> For all things *are* for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. <sup>16</sup> Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, <sup>18</sup> while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal. <sup>5:1</sup> For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. <sup>2</sup> For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, <sup>3</sup> if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. <sup>4</sup> For we who are in *this* tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. <sup>5</sup> Now He who has prepared us for this very thing *is* God, who also has given us the

Spirit as a guarantee. <sup>6</sup> So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. <sup>7</sup> For we walk by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup> We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. <sup>9</sup> Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. <sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. <sup>11</sup> Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences. <sup>12</sup> For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have *an answer* for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. <sup>13</sup> For if we are beside ourselves, *it is* for God; or if we are of sound mind, *it is* for you. <sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; <sup>15</sup> and He died for all, that

those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. <sup>16</sup> Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him thus* no longer. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. <sup>18</sup> Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup> that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

May our gracious Lord add His blessing to the reading of His precious word.

Wow! There is so much we could look at in this passage.

- Obviously, I won't be expounding it verse by verse, but we will look at what it says about our subject from an airplane view.

### **I. Let's begin by looking at the job description of a minister of the word (a preacher).**

- What is the work that God has given him to do?

A. Let me qualify what we are looking at with this job description.

1. First, we are looking at the job description of a minister in a very general way.
  - We are not looking at the specific task that a certain kind of minister of the word might be given—one who is a church planter in a certain place, another as a chaplain in the military, yet another as an associate minister, and still another as a missionary to Malawi.
  - We are looking at what is common to all of them as ministers of the word.
2. Second, in another sense, we are looking at the job description in a narrow way...
  - We are looking this morning only at ministers of the word—preachers—not at all the other kinds of ministry that one might be called to such as a deacon or a ruling elder or some kind of Christian service.

- Everything will be focused on the preacher.
- B. So what is the essence of the minister’s task—the overall aim of his labours?
1. To use the beautiful picture that Paul gives us in 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 it is to **“diffuse the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ in every place.”**
    - The imagery he uses here is that of the victory parade of a conquering emperor, such as they had in those days.
    - As conqueror, he would call for a celebration parade in which special incense was burned while the conquering army marched through the streets with their captives trailing along in chains.
      - To the victors, the smell was the smell of victory, and to their defeated foes, it was the stench of death.
  2. Paul says that this is the effect of the minister of the gospel’s task.
    - He proclaims the good news that Christ has conquered sin and death for His people, and diffuses an aroma to all who hear:
      - As Paul says in 2:15-16: **For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. <sup>16</sup> To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?”**
    - The minister’s work is by God’s grace, to proclaim the victorious saving work of our risen Lord Jesus Christ including forgiveness, reconciliation, the new life we have in Him, and our glorious inheritance in such a way that it is understood...
      - to those who perishing, that they and their whole way of life under Satan their master is doomed...
      - and to those who are united to Christ for salvation, that they are sharing in the inheritance of their Master who has delivered them from sin and death.
  3. Paul goes on to develop this life-and-death theme. He shows that preaching the gospel gives spiritual life.
    - a. In chapter 3:7-18, he contrasts it with ministry under the Old Testament.
      - Under the Old Testament, Moses told us what was required for salvation through the shadows and ceremonies of OT worship—but what was required had not yet been provided...
        - So it was a ministry that showed them what they needed but what they did not have—in that way it was a ministry of condemnation and death.
        - It left them in need of Christ, in whom they were taught to hope.
      - But now under the New Testament, those who preach the gospel have the message that actually imparts life!
        - Preachers proclaim what Christ has done to save and God’s Spirit gives life to those who believe.
        - Hearers are brought into the glorious inheritance of life in the Spirit with the risen Christ!
        - They become partakers of life in the Holy Spirit by preaching.
    - b. In chapter 4, Paul speaks of how he keeps on preaching despite persecution.

- The reason he is not discouraged and shut down is because he realises that by preaching, he is actually bringing life to those who hear!
  - He knows that in Christ, though he is battered and abused in this world, he has a glorious inheritance and that his hearers are obtaining that with him through the ministry of the word. His work is glorious!
- c. In chapter 5, Paul speaks of the work of ministry as that of an ambassador, pleading with men to be reconciled to God through Christ.
- The whole point is to make known to all the riches of His grace, the victory that He has won, that people might turn to the Lord and enter into life everlasting in the Father's house by the grace of Jesus through the Spirit.
  - Preachers hold out this life, urging all to receive it and to walk in it... always keeping the hearers mindful of the incredible riches that are ours in Christ.
- C. The evidence that one is a true minister of Christ is in that some of his hearers obtain life through his ministry.
- Paul speaks of this in the first three verses of chapter 3.
  - He says that he and his companions don't need letters from elsewhere to commend them to the Corinthians (some of whom were questioning the legitimacy of Paul's ministry),
    - They only needed to look at around at those among them who had received life by the ministry of the Spirit through the message preached.
    - In 3:3, Paul says: **"clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart."**
  - Paul and his companions had founded the Corinthian church—God had used them to impart life in Christ to these, proving that they were ministers and that God had made them ministers.

TRANS> And that brings us to the next thing I want to look at.

- Having seen that a minister is one who spreads the life-giving aroma of Christ to His people by the gospel, I now want to show you that:

## **II. God makes ministers. They do not make themselves.**

- A. Paul is clear: he and his companions in ministry are not sufficient in themselves.
- There is no way that they could make themselves into those who impart life to sinners by preaching the gospel.
    - How could they possibly speak life into the hearts of dead sinners?
    - Even if you recognise that the life-giving force is by the Spirit of God, how could they even speak the gospel in a way that was adequate for such a great work?
  - Verse 3:5 begins, **"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as being from ourselves."**
    - Of course they could not speak life into people. The Spirit gives life...
    - But neither could they of themselves in speak in such a way that the Spirit would use their speaking as a means to do so great a work...
- B. He states unequivocally (in the rest of 3:5), **"Our sufficiency is from God!"**

- And then he adds in verse 6 that God made them sufficient as ministers of the new covenant ... God... **“who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”**
- Understand from this that ministers do not make themselves ministers, nor do other ministers—this is a work that the Lord reserves as His own work.
  - He is the one who calls them, not by a voice or a vision, but by giving them gifts that make them sufficient as those who are able to be the instruments that He uses to bring His message that saves to sinners.
- Jesus taught us to pray to the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth labourers into His harvest.
  - His method of calling them is by giving them what they need to minister life by the Spirit to His people.
    - And to that subject we now turn.

### **III. What does God give to a man whom He has appointed to preach?**

A. First of all, He gives him a holy life—a blameless life.

1. If he is to proclaim the riches of the inheritance we have in Christ and one who is to urge people to pursue those riches, he must himself be one who partakes of the riches of that gracious inheritance.
  - If he does not cherish it enough to obtain it himself—when Christ is such a gracious and willing Saviour—how can he lead others to seek it?
  - He must have a love for life in the Spirit if he is to preach life in the Spirit.
2. Here in 2 Corinthians 4:2, Paul speaks of how true ministers have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully.
  - In Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3, there is a full list of godly characteristics that a man must have before he can be received by the church as a minister.
  - Overall, he must be blameless—in his family life, in his behaviour, in his community—he must be a godly man.
3. These are qualities that every Christian ought to have—a blameless walk with Christ—a manifest love and service to Him.
  - But the truth is that many do not have such a life.
  - The point is, those who minister *must* have this.
    - If they do not, it indicates that Christ has not made them ministers, no matter how well they might speak or how engaging they may be.

B. Second, Christ gives those He makes ministers a passion or burden for ministry.

1. This comes from a deep sense that the Lord has so much to give His people though they be sinners...
  - such riches, such grace, such blessing and life—an eternal inheritance in glory with Him and with the Father...
  - The one called to preach sees how Christ has graciously given Himself for us that He might bring grace and salvation to us.

- He yearns for men and women to connect with this blessed Saviour who is ready bestow such excellent blessing.
  - As Paul says in verse 3:18: **“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”**
    - The preacher knows that it is through preaching that they behold Christ.
    - The preacher yearns to impart to hearers what 2 Cor 4:6 speaks of: **the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in face of Jesus Christ.**
    - He wants to see them become the new creation in Christ described in 5:17 where the old things have passed away and all things have become new.
2. The one Christ calls also sees that no one can ignore God and His salvation without the gravest consequences.
- He is burdened for the souls of men and has an urgency to plead with them to be reconciled to God...
    - 2 Cor 5:11 he says: **knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men...**
    - And in 5:20-21, he says: **Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**
3. It must not be that any are unaware of the danger they are in without Christ or of the blessing that Christ has to give to all who come to Him.
- This is a passion that ministers must have if they are to be ministers...
    - They must say with Paul, “Woe is me if I preach not the gospel!”
    - Like him, they are like mad men, as Paul explains in 5:14-15—that if he and his ministry companions are beside themselves it is for this reason: **For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; <sup>15</sup> and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.**
  - Here again, this passion is a passion and a burden that all of you ought to have as you pray for your children, for the lost, for the church, and for the world.
    - Of course you should want them to obtain the blessings of the gospel!
    - No one is qualified to be a minister without this passion, but every Christian should have it because of the value of the riches of the grace we have in Christ.

TRANS> So both of these characteristics—a holy life and a burden for others to live fully in Christ—are characteristics that every believer ought to have and that ministers must have.

- But the third thing that Christ gives to ministers is unique to them as preachers.

C. Third, the Lord gives those He makes ministers gifts for preaching.

1. First, gives them a robust and comprehensive understanding of God’s word.
  - God can greatly use and often does greatly use those who have a limited understanding of God’s word... but these are not qualified for ministry.



- A minister must be, as we are told in Titus 1:9, one who is **holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.**
- And as Jesus told us, he must be able to bring forth treasures new and old to feed His sheep from the treasury of God's word.
- This does not mean that every minister must have as great a mind as the apostle Paul—but as it is his job to set forth the truth of God, he must have a sufficient ability to understand that truth.
  - When I first began to preach, I took comfort in that I always urged my hearers to be like the Bereans and check it out for themselves—but then I realised that I was responsible to make sure I was speaking the truth.
  - That's when I packed up my family and went to seminary... so I could be furnished for the great work of preaching.
- 2. Second, the Lord gives the one called to minister the ability to preach so that people hear Christ through them in a way that imparts life in the Spirit to them.
  - His preaching must be such that some are convicted of their sin, are able to see the sweet excellence and glory of Christ, are motivated to seek Him and to serve Him, are encouraged by His promises...
  - God must speak through them—
    - As we saw in 2 Cor 5:20, He must plead through them...
  - This is a gift of preaching that comes from the Lord so that a man not only imparts information, but transforming truth—again, by the Spirit of God.
    - Those who hear him have a sense that they have heard from Christ Himself. This is the gift that Christ gives.

TRANS> So there you have the three main gifts that Christ gives to those whom He has made ministers: a holy life, a passion to impart Christ to others, and gifts to do so.

#### **IV. How are all of these gifts recognised?**

##### **A. The holy life is seen by all.**

1. The man himself can see that God has transformed him, and he knows that it by the grace of God that he is what he is.
2. His family sees that he is a sincere and godly man.
3. The congregation sees him serving the Lord and growing in His grace.
4. And the Presbytery examines him and finds him faithful as one willing to submit to authority and also to maintain his integrity before the Lord.
5. He even should have a good reputation in the community—not of course with the enemies of the gospel, but as a man who is honest and faithful, not immoral or one that could be justly accused... blameless, like Daniel.

##### **B. The passion for ministry is something that is very much in the man.**

1. He has that desire to impart the truth to every man's conscience—to reach the lost—to see those who know Christ walking in the riches of His grace.
  - He knows that there is a burning within him to impart truth by preaching.

2. And of course this passion is evident by the way he lives and the way he speaks.
  - People see that he is eager to speak the truth to them.
  - But understand that there may be great variety in how this passion looks...
    - In one man may have a deep passion that is very fixed and settled—that makes him relentless rather than flamboyant.
    - Another may have a fire in his soul that flashes forth in great power and brings tears and passionate pleas.
      - You may prefer one of these to the other, but God is pleased to use both.

C. Gifts for preaching are often seen under development at first.

1. Some have natural ability to speak and persuade, even before they know the Lord—but still this is God’s gift to them for ministry...
  - Others cultivate such gifts by hard work and training, but they are able to cultivate them—and that too is from the Lord.
  - Still others can have a rather sudden impartation of certain gifts—a man with a dull mind suddenly becomes brighter...
    - or a man that was never able to speak, suddenly can do so with great power even apart from training.
    - Again, there is great variety.
2. The thing that matters is that the man through his preparation for the ministry (if not before) gets to the place where, as we saw, he is able to speak in such a way that the voice of Christ is heard through him...
  - that he diffuses the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who perishing.
  - Presbyteries and congregations are both appointed to determine if a man has these gifts. They know by experience when they hear the man preach.
  - The gift may be small and weak at first, but how special to see God impart it to a man. I have seen it with some of our students of ministry that I have had the privilege of laying my hands on to set them apart to their work.

TRANS> And let me stress that we must recognise that there is great variety in those that God chooses for His work.

D. Be careful that you don’t add to these basic requirements.

1. Always keep in mind that God uses all kinds of men.
  - All we have to do is look at how different the apostles and prophets are from each other—yet God greatly used them all...
    - And we see how different great preachers have been—an Augustine and a Chrysostom, a Luther and a Calvin, a Sproul and a Ferguson.
  - They have these three things: a holy life, a passion for ministry, and gifts whereby Christ speaks through them...
  - But one is bold as a lion, another is more timid.
    - One is loud, another is quiet.
    - One has a broad education, another not so much.

- One has a great understanding of contemporary culture, another doesn't.
- One obtains his gifts by much labour, another has them more easily.
- One is controlling, another is more submissive.
- One is refined in manners, and another is coarse.
- One is engaging and attractive, another is socially awkward.
- One is an initiator, another is more passive.
- One is strong, another is weak.
- One is very warm, another is more technical.
- One is spontaneous, another is more contemplative.

2. What matters is that Christ Himself is heard through them.

- Sometimes either those who are considering their calling or those who are examining those who are called can look for more than godliness, desire for ministry, and the gift of preaching—
  - but we must beware of adding to these requirements, either in looking for some kind of supernatural call or sign, or some personality type.
- I have always had an appreciation of the contrast of pastors that Riverside ARP Church in Cambridge has had...
  - I am sure that some of you are smiling because you know that there are seldom two men so different in personality as their first pastor and the pastor they have now... but the congregation testifies that God has spoken life into them through both men.
- It is God who raises up and uses men.
  - He loves us and delights to speak to us through earthen vessels, men of clay, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us (2 Cor 4:7).

**V. So how does all of this apply to you?**

- A. First, pray and endeavour that you will have the qualities that all Christians ought to have—a blameless life and a true desire for others to know Christ.
- B. Second, pray and labour to develop gifts and ability to serve in whatever calling God has given you. If you discern that you might be called to the ministry, give yourself to diligent preparation for that work.
- C. Third, do what you can on your part to send labourers. Pray that God will give us labourers and equip them well that they might make the aroma of Christ known in every place.
- D. And fourth, pray that you will be among those who hear the voice of Christ through the ministers of the word that He sends. Pray that you will enjoy the riches of Christ's inheritance (new life in the Spirit) that He is eager to impart to all who hear.